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Biographical Note
Henry Drewal served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nigeria from 1964 to 1966 as a French and English teacher.

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Oral History Interview

with

Henry Drewal (Part 2)

May 15, 2016
Madison, Wisconsin

By Phyllis Noble

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

NOBLE: [00:00:03] This is Phyllis Noble again. I am continuing the interview with Dr. Henry Drewal. The interview, which we began a year and a half ago on September 11th, I think, 2014. I regret that we had technical difficulties, which probably were due to my own ineptitude.

DREWAL: [00:00:27] And I think what we'll do is we'll just check to make sure this is recording before we carry on. Ok?

NOBLE: [00:00:35] We could, if you like.

DREWAL: [00:00:36] Yes, let's do it. Just to be sure, because this has happened to me.

NOBLE: [00:00:45] Ok. We're hoping for the best.

DREWAL: [00:00:48] Hmm. Ok. Good.

NOBLE: [00:00:50] Um, you've arrived in Nigeria, you find yourself in Ibadan. Could you talk a little bit about Ibadan? What's Ibadan like?

DREWAL: [00:01:00] Well, Ibadan is a big city, so that's the first surprise. Well, no, it's the second surprise. The first surprise is getting out of the plane in Lagos and walking out of the plane and.

NOBLE: [00:01:22] You would have come down the stairs, right into the tarmac.

DREWAL: [00:01:24] Right, stairs, right, and thinking that, oh yeah, we need to get away from the plane because it's the heat of the jet engines that we're feeling. And I walked away from the plane and realized it was the heat of Nigeria. So that was the first sensory experience. And then we went up to Ibadan. I'm not sure. I don't remember how we got there. We must have done it by road. It must have been a bus. So I was seeing the Nigerian countryside for the first time. I think one of my most strong immediate impressions was the smell in the air of the wood that was used for cooking fires. Very distinctive smell. Whenever I smell it, I'm transported back to West Africa.

NOBLE: [00:02:25] Yes.

DREWAL: [00:02:26] Not just Nigeria, but other places as well. And we arrived, really warmly welcomed by the staff at the Peace Corps office, which I think was in the USIS, the U.S. Information Service offices or complex there. Ibadan is a big city. We were kind of shown around briefly and we were there just for a short time, just to give us our initial orientation. Alice O'Grady was in charge of the office, as I remember, and a wonderful person, a very supportive person for the whole time that I was there. And I think we met some of the other Americans on the staff of USIS and others in the Peace Corps office. George Sealy, I think, was our director. If that name is correct, an African-American man who had a distinguished career in education in the States, as I recall. He was a wonderful person, wonderful director. And I think he at that changed at some point during the two years that I was there.

DREWAL: [00:03:48] And then we were told where we were headed. I think I might have known already from orientation when I was, when we were still in New York, and I was assigned to the African Church Grammar School in Abeokuta. A-B-E-O-K-U-T-A. Abeokuta is a well-known educational center. Secondary schools, academic secondary schools, and a wonderful teacher training college. It was a refugee city established in the 19th century as a refuge during the period of the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century. And it was one of the first places where returned Yorubas who had been liberated by the British, taken off of the ships that were enslaving them and carrying them to America and sent to and then deposited in Sierra Leone, where then missionaries were Christianizing, converting many of them Yoruba to Christianity, and the first Yoruba bishop, Samuel Crowther, was among that generation, late 19th century. So many of the schools had this connection to return the Yorubas, who came back from Sierra Leone to establish churches and missions back in their homeland, Lagos and Abeokuta, and some to Ibadan. So African Church Grammar School was the school that I was assigned. It was, um, the principal was Eluyemi, E-L-U-Y-E-M-I. Eluyemi. E-L-U- Yeah. Y-E-M-I. Eluyemi. God loves me is the translation. He was the pastor of an African church. African church combined Anglican elements, as well as indigenous Yoruba elements, in its religious practice. It was a small school, but it was a rigorous school for the students. Being a grammar school, it was training kids to be, uh, you know, people within the new Nigerian government after independence of 1960, so this was 1964.

NOBLE: [00:06:56] And these students were mixed, boys and girls?

DREWAL: [00:06:59] Boys and girls, mostly boys. But about a third, a third to half, were women. This was mostly boys, but a good, good percentage were also women.

NOBLE: [00:07:15] And was it a boarding school?

DREWAL: [00:07:18] It was a boarding school. Some students came from the town, from their homes in the town of Abeokuta, the city of Abeokuta. But most of them lived on campus. And at this point it was a strict English medium school, and Eluyemi was very strict about that, that students, even though

they were almost all Yoruba, must speak English on campus. Of course they did, and they didn't. But as all students were, would be. But it was strict because English was a compulsory subject for HSC.

NOBLE: [00:07:59] Mm-hmm. HSC being?

DREWAL: [00:08:01] Higher School Certificate, which would be the entrance into university at this time.

NOBLE: [00:08:09] And this is thought to be equivalent to what was happening in Britain.

DREWAL: [00:08:13] Yes. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:08:15] On a par?

DREWAL: [00:08:16] Yes. On a par with it. Right. And Ibadan University was the primary university, but there were others. There was one in the east at Nsukka, which was on an American model. But Ibadan was on a British model and as well as Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, in the north, on a British model. So I lived on campus. I had a flat, an apartment, above one of the buildings that was the girls' dormitory. They were on the ground floor and I was on a second floor and I had a separate, you know, entrance to my flat. There was another faculty flat that adjoined mine in the same building, and it was a relatively new building. So and the first, you know, my housing was quite comfortable. I had something like a one, two bedroom place with a dining room and a living room.

NOBLE: [00:09:23] And did you employ someone to help with the shopping and the cleaning?

DREWAL: [00:09:27] I did. I did. I wouldn't have survived two years on my own cooking, so I hired a cook. Most of the cooks who were working for either other Peace Corps volunteers or other Americans or other Brits or other Canadians who were teaching in the various schools, because there was the Canadian equivalent of CUSO. And there was the British equivalent of

VSO and then us Peace Corps volunteers, and then there were other contract teachers and so on.

NOBLE: [00:10:06] Yes. And in the faculty at your school, the African Church Grammar School, were there other expatriates?

DREWAL: [00:10:13] No. Oh yes, there were. I was the only Peace Corps person in my school, but there was an Indian couple, Agarwal. And Patel, these were both, I think, Gujaratis one couple, a husband and wife and then a single man. And they were other, the other expat faculty members at this grammar school. All the others were Yorubas from Abeokuta or other parts of Yoruba land.

NOBLE: [00:10:47] And did the other expats live also, as you did, on the school compound?

DREWAL: [00:10:53] Yes. Yes, they did, in a separate house. I think they were, if I remember correctly, I think they were in an extension or attachment of the principal's house, which was on campus as well, and they lived in one part of that house.

NOBLE: [00:11:11] And the principal was Yoruba.

DREWAL: [00:11:13] Yes. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:11:15] And did most of the Yoruba faculty live on campus or in town?

DREWAL: [00:11:19] They lived in town.

NOBLE: [00:11:20] Did they have a choice?

DREWAL: [00:11:22] I think they had a choice, but there wasn't any other housing for teachers on campus. It was the dormitory for the boys and for the girls. My apartment, one other apartment on the other side. And I'm not, I don't remember who stayed there. And then there's the other Indian colleagues who were on campus. Everybody else was off campus. So when I arrived,

we got there, it was like late August and it was school break for two weeks.

NOBLE: [00:11:59] Mm hmm. That's good.

DREWAL: [00:12:01] No, it was terrible.

NOBLE: [00:12:03] It wasn't, really?

DREWAL: [00:12:03] It was terrible. That was the worst period of my two years.

NOBLE: [00:12:08] What made it so bad?

DREWAL: [00:12:11] Because I was at a total loss. I felt totally alone. I was thrown into a culture that I was desperate to try to understand, comprehend, and become a part of. And I felt totally unable to do so. I had as a youngster growing up, I don't know if I mentioned this in the earlier part of our interview, but when I was a counselor in a summer camp during my years in high school, starting when I was a freshman or a sophomore in high school, I was a camp counselor and tennis instructor. I suffered very serious homesickness. And, you know, it was a physical and mental psychological state. And I battled that all through high school and even during the years of college, I always had trouble in those transitions leaving home. And this was the most extreme of those because it wasn't like I could get on a train or a, you know, a drive in my car back home to see my family. And I realized I was there for two years, and I just didn't know if I was going to be able to do it.

NOBLE: [00:13:46] And you didn't have a function to distract from this.

DREWAL: [00:13:48] And I had no function. That was the, that's what made it so difficult because I was dumped. You know, I felt like I was dumped in a place where no one knew me. Nobody cared. And I was far from Ibadan and from the people who had welcomed me warmly and that had been fine. But once I was alone in my new home for the next two years, it was daunting.

NOBLE: [00:14:17] Yes.

DREWAL: [00:14:17] And it was daunting because there were still two weeks before classes began. My colleagues would return and life would come to that campus. I was essentially in an abandoned site.

NOBLE: [00:14:31] That's right, it was all empty. Everybody had cleared out, they're on vacation.

DREWAL: [00:14:34] Everybody had cleared out. The principal was away on travels. And I knew absolutely no one and I know I had little or no Yoruba. I had learned something during training, but it was, you know, it's just too rudimentary. And so it was a very strong cultural shock.

NOBLE: [00:14:57] How far was your school from the center of Abeokuta?

DREWAL: [00:15:01] We were in the city, but on the edge of the city. We were in what is called Ibara quarter. I-B-A-R-A. It's the Igbado part of town and the Igbado are the original inhabitants of that area. It was the Egba who came later, the E-G-B-A peoples who came and Oyo people who came later to settle Abeokuta as a refugee center and city. So we were specifically the address of the school and the area was Eta Iyalode. E-T-A. I-Y-A-L-O-D-E, which means crossroads of the market. The women, the woman, who was the head of the marketplace. It was near market area. And much later on, when I returned to do research on Yoruba art, Eta Iyalode and Ibara quarter became an important site for my research on the arts. But I had none, I knew nothing about it.

NOBLE: [00:16:16] At that time. That's right.

DREWAL: [00:16:16] Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

NOBLE: [00:16:18] Did you find yourself getting out of your, your apartment was furnished when you got there?

DREWAL: [00:16:23] Yeah, basically, I had to provide some things and I had to find somebody to help. And that took a little while. It wasn't immediate. So

those first two weeks were the toughest. After that, everything, as soon as people started coming back to campus and I found somebody to help me with the cooking and Igbo chap because it was mostly the Igbo who were the domestic, so-called domestic, servants in the community, not Yoruba, but Igbo, I-G-B-O.

NOBLE: [00:16:57] Yes.

DREWAL: [00:16:57] Yeah. And once that life and activity started, I was OK, but I have to admit at certain points in those two weeks, I was ready to call the Peace Corps office and say, can't do it, have to go home.

NOBLE: [00:17:18] Yeah, yeah. I'm so glad you didn't.

DREWAL: [00:17:20] I'm so glad I didn't either. I stuck it out, as I had several other years before and in different situations.

NOBLE: [00:17:28] Yes.

DREWAL: [00:17:29] So and now it's ironic because I'm the one person. I'm the traveler in my family. I'm the one who's never at home. And yet in those early years, I was the one who was most affected by being away from home.

NOBLE: [00:17:46] Yes. This says something about the strength of your family, though, and the close attachments, you know, which is a good thing.

DREWAL: [00:17:53] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:17:55] There were other Peace Corps volunteers in Abeokuta not connected with your school?

DREWAL: [00:18:01] Right. There were, I think, it was one other woman who was in another school. And then there was somebody who was in a smaller town, not too far away, but it was their vacation time. So everybody had fled.

NOBLE: [00:18:20] Even the Peace Corps volunteers, they're all gone?

DREWAL: [00:18:21] Oh yeah, everybody. They were all gone. Of course, there was a thriving community around me, but I had, I wasn't able to connect.

NOBLE: [00:18:32] You're on the outside of it still, yeah.

DREWAL: [00:18:33] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:18:33] And when you were at home in your apartment, up on the second floor there. Did you have electricity available to you?

DREWAL: [00:18:42] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:18:42] You did.

DREWAL: [00:18:42] Yep, I had running water and electricity. It was a newly constructed building, as a dormitory and as flats for faculty.

NOBLE: [00:18:53] Concrete block?

DREWAL: [00:18:54] Yes, concrete block. And it was well constructed. It was a good school. You know, Eluyemi was, um, he was an impressive character, very strict and very firm and very accomplished in what he was trying to do.

NOBLE: [00:19:12] So let's go into the classroom. Two weeks later, students start arriving.

DREWAL: [00:19:17] Right.

NOBLE: [00:19:18] Faculty pours in.

DREWAL: [00:19:19] Right. And I meet my colleagues and things start to improve. I like my colleagues. I'm learning to teach. I've developed a audio lingual method approach to teaching French, and I started making my own textbook of conversation so that it was a kind of call and response. It was mainly to have them learn by speaking first and then writing grammar

were to come later. And it was basic, very elementary kind of French. And then I was also doing some English and English literature classes as well.

NOBLE: [00:20:02] Do you remember what kind of English lit you were exposing the students to?

DREWAL: [00:20:07] No, not really. I don't. Those were not things that were attracting me.

NOBLE: [00:20:14] Of course.

DREWAL: [00:20:15] I, you know, I realized pretty early on that I didn't want to become a language teacher. I tried to do the best I could in the time that I had there, but other interests started pulling me in other directions.

NOBLE: [00:20:35] And we'll spend most of our time talking about those other interests. But I'm still curious about some things in your class.

DREWAL: [00:20:42] Sure.

NOBLE: [00:20:43] You invented your own system?

DREWAL: [00:20:45] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:20:45] An audio lingual of conversation first and then grammar analysis. Were you provided with books, textbooks for French?

DREWAL: [00:20:54] I think I had. I think I had something from the training program because we were doing student teaching. We had to organize some classes during the time we were at T.C. [Teachers College] and at Barnard, because we were housed at Barnard. And we had some classes on the, most of our classes where at Teachers College, but also at the university.

NOBLE: [00:21:20] And that included some student teaching.

DREWAL: [00:21:22] Yes, it did. Right. So that was our rudimentary training as secondary school teachers because most of us were not education majors as college students, we were in subjects of various kinds. But I enjoyed the teaching. One of the things that I may have said about my experience at Hamilton that I very much appreciated was their emphasis upon public speaking, on rhetoric and public speaking. This was a core element of the curriculum at Hamilton, and I became a good public speaker and that helped as a teacher, of course. So, so that was, the teaching was good. I enjoyed it. And despite the no speaking of Yoruba on campus, I encouraged my students to teach me Yoruba.

NOBLE: [00:22:18] Outside of class?

DREWAL: [00:22:20] Outside the class and out of hearing of the principal. And that's, of course, was giving me confidence to then enter the community that I was living in, and I made friends with a number of the Yoruba, my Yoruba colleagues. I remember, well, one of them invited me to a luncheon at the local sports club and this was a hangover from the British presence in Abeokuta.

NOBLE: [00:22:53] But the Yoruba were welcome in it.

DREWAL: [00:22:55] They were, and it had become a Yoruba club, essentially. And I was also interested in it because it had a tennis court, you see, and I was a serious tennis player.

NOBLE: [00:23:08] That's right.

DREWAL: [00:23:10] But this Yoruba colleague invited me to lunch. And this was soon after classes had started, maybe two or three weeks into the first session of teaching. And I ordered a dish called jollof rice because I wanted to become Yoruba, you see. So I didn't order the English menu. It was the Yoruba menu, okay?

NOBLE: [00:23:39] Right, yes.

DREWAL: [00:23:39] And it was jollof rice. But it was seasoned as a Yoruba would season it, that is, with lots of pepper and which I thought was tomatoes. Well, I was in for a surprise and I started tearing and having to blow my nose and Yoruba friend, my new Yoruba colleague friend, he never said anything, but I'm sure he felt that I was crying for home, that I was sad and that, because, you know, pepper is pepper. You know, you don't cry unless you're sad about something. So anyway, so this was one of my early experiences of, you know, taking in Yoruba cuisine and making another kind of an adjustment.

NOBLE: [00:24:38] Yeah. Did you have beer to go along with that jollof rice, wash it down?

DREWAL: [00:24:45] Yeah, I tried. But that just spread it around further so that it was affecting every part of my body. All of this goes into now my own research on sensiotics, you see.

NOBLE: [00:24:59] Ah yes.

DREWAL: [00:25:00] These are the things I think about now because they are actually some of the deepest, strongest memories of cultural experience and cultural, different cultural ways and how we adapt to them or don't.

NOBLE: [00:25:15] Your initial experience of encountering that wall of heat when you got off the plane.

DREWAL: [00:25:22] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:25:22] And then the smells of the marketplace and the wood fires. And now the taste and the bite of that extremely hot pepper.

DREWAL: [00:25:34] Yes. Yes, right. And I'm sure the sounds of the city of Ibadan and of Abeokuta are also things that that I was having to process and think about and have them become part of me. And these initial challenges of adaptation to a new cultural milieu is one of the key lessons of sensiotics. That is, when I go to do research and study in a new place, I try to make extensive notes and document with film and photographs, all

of the things that are so unusual, so different in those initial encounters because once they become naturalized, once they become ordinary, you don't notice them anymore. You don't think about them. And those are some of the key insights that sensiotics has brought me in subsequent experiences. So, so I started learning more Yoruba as a volunteer, that is, a Peace Corps volunteer. I was also expected to volunteer for other jobs at the college, and so I was appointed as games master, which in the British system is the athletic director, okay? So I was in charge of student sports.

NOBLE: [00:27:16] And those sports were? Not baseball.

DREWAL: [00:27:17] And the sports were not baseball. Well, soccer was the big sport in the school.

NOBLE: [00:27:23] Which they would have called football.

DREWAL: [00:27:24] Which they called football, right, and which I knew nothing about. So I was the football coach. Luckily, they were great players and they knew all the rules. So I just kind of was there for the games and for practices and, you know, for, you know, preparations and so on. But I had a Yoruba colleague on the faculty who helped me with that. Because of my interest in tennis, there was an open space not too far from the dormitory and my flat, that looked like a likely spot for a tennis court. So I had it built. I had a tennis court built and I got my, I got Hamilton College to donate the tennis net, which they shipped over. And we.

NOBLE: [00:28:16] How did you fund the construction of the court?

DREWAL: [00:28:20] Um, the principal gave me some funds and they were doing some construction of another building. So there was a tractor available and I just had him level the space large enough and I put in the posts and sunk them in concrete. And we had a tennis court. However, and we were, I thought it would work fine because the soil in Abeokuta and much of Yoruba land is lateritic soil, it's clay-based iron rich soil.

NOBLE: [00:28:55] Red.

DREWAL: [00:28:56] Red. Looks like a clay tennis court. However, I didn't, it wasn't fine enough, even though I had a steamroller come and steamroll the thing down. The grains were still too large, so it was only a semi-functioning tennis court and we had no money to pave it with anything more permanent. But it was my attempt as games master to add another sport to the college. And I was also the coach of the volleyball team, a new volleyball team, and I knew something about volleyball. So I was able to do some coaching and in fact brought a couple of volleyball, American volleyball strategies, like spiking and stuff to the game that the other teams didn't know about. And so we had the winning team in the town during my two years. So those were my efforts at school besides the teaching. Early on, I think in the first three or four months, on a trip to Ibadan.

NOBLE: [00:30:12] Which was how far away?

DREWAL: [00:30:14] It was about an hour and a half by road.

NOBLE: [00:30:18] And how would you get there?

DREWAL: [00:30:20] I'd take public transportation or long distance, yeah, either long distance taxis or sometimes busses.

NOBLE: [00:30:29] And a taxi, of course, was not our concept of a taxi here.

DREWAL: [00:30:32] Yeah, right. Well, these are communal taxis.

NOBLE: [00:30:35] That's right, you sit and wait until it fills up with enough passengers.

DREWAL: [00:30:37] Right. When it fills up, right. And it's, yeah, and it's over full, you know, because it's a four-seater car that takes maybe six or eight people. Yeah, yeah. So those, that's how I would get to Ibadan, but at a certain point, and I can't remember exactly when. But maybe after the first three or four months I bought myself a motorcycle. Wasn't supposed to have it, but I got it, and they were kind of flexible on that matter. But they were

concerned about road accidents and safety and so on. But I had a small Honda 50 and I wouldn't, I would call it a motorbike. It's not any motorcycle. It's like a Harley person would say, this one's a joke.

NOBLE: [00:31:22] I too had a Honda 50, top speed 21 miles an hour.

DREWAL: [00:31:24] Right, exactly. And in fact, I took that all over Nigeria.

NOBLE: [00:31:29] Ah, wow.

DREWAL: [00:31:30] By train, carried it on a train, and then used it the north on one of my long vacations. So, but the main travel was either south to Lagos or east to Ibadan. And when I went to Ibadan, folks in the Peace Corps office or USIS, who I had become friends with, told me about one of the most famous people to grow up from Abeokuta, become an outstanding international scholar of history. His name was Surabu, um. Soriabu Biobaku. I think I'm getting the first name wrong [Saburi], but Biobaku. B-I-O-B-A-K-U. Biobaku. That's a name given to a child who is Egba. This was a child who is said to be a child born to die, that is, die early. So the parents will give that child a name that says, if you are born, you must not die. That's what Biobaku is about. Well, in his case, he lived a long, fruitful and productive life. He's written quite a few books on the history of Abeokuta and the people. He was very interested and he was a faculty member at the University of Ibadan. So I went to meet him because I told him I was there and that I was interested in arts and so on. And he said, I want to try to establish a museum in Abeokuta.

NOBLE: [00:33:32] He said that?

DREWAL: [00:33:32] He said that, and we think we have a building. So I started working with him to make this a reality. And we got a police station, a decommissioned police station in the town, in the city of Abeokuta, and we tried to then get funds to begin building a collection that would document the history and culture of Abeokuta because it has an illustrious and a very crucial history from mid-19th century onward that's linked to these return of Yorubas from Sierra Leone, as a refugee place that fought off the attacks of the Dahomey Kingdom at various points because it's a city

that's built in the hills. Abeokuta means built under the rock of Olumo. Olumo is the sacred rock at Abeokuta. Olumo. So we tried working on that. And if it had happened, if it had been able to go forward, I might have not been doing teaching. I might not have continued teaching for the two years, but I might have joined the Nigerian Department of Antiquities, where a number of other Yoruba, I mean, sorry, Peace Corps volunteers were also working. People who later on, when I went back to graduate school, became my colleagues in African art studies.

NOBLE: [00:35:17] Oh, yes, Perk Foss.

DREWAL: [00:35:19] Well, Foss was one and Phil Stevens, who taught somewhere in Yorubaland and then stopped his teaching and was shifted to the Department of Antiquities and did all the work that established the museum and the site of Esie where these sandstone carvings are. So and Phil Stevens is somebody that I corresponded with and have worked with ever since. He's retired now, but he taught for many years at SUNY Buffalo in the anthropology department.

NOBLE: [00:36:00] So what got you interested in this? Was Biobaku at the University of Ibadan? How did you find out about him? How did you somehow?

DREWAL: [00:36:11] I don't know. I don't know. Somebody, I think somebody in the Peace Corps office suggested that I should meet him, and he should know that I was teaching in Abeokuta. Because he, as a son of Abeokuta, he was very interested in promoting that as an academic center with many schools and to establishing its place in the history of Yoruba land. And so I was there and was interested and had lots of enthusiasm. And so we tried to put a project together.

NOBLE: [00:36:53] But it sounds like it didn't come to fruition.

DREWAL: [00:36:55] No, it didn't.

NOBLE: [00:36:56] Because you continued teaching instead.

DREWAL: [00:36:57] Yeah, I continued teaching. Right. But I would work on that during school breaks for, you know, for that first year that I was there. But by the end of the first year, it was clear that it wasn't going to happen. He maybe he went overseas or he was caught up in other projects that he was working on. And so it just never, it never took off. We got it to a proposal point and we submitted it to the government, but then no funding.

NOBLE: [00:37:30] When you say that you worked on that project during school breaks for that first year, what do you mean? What was your work in that regard?

DREWAL: [00:37:40] Well, it was, um. It was going to meet him in Ibadan and talk about the project and what we wanted to have happen in the museum. And then it was my contacting government officials in Abeokuta to try to get them to move on this on this proposal.

NOBLE: [00:38:02] A lot of political layers.

DREWAL: [00:38:03] Yeah, and nothing came of it. That's all I can say.

NOBLE: [00:38:08] But it planted a seed.

DREWAL: [00:38:09] Planted the seed, and I don't know if there is a museum in Abeokuta now. I don't know. But that's one of the things we tried.

NOBLE: [00:38:17] So when you were up in Ibadan talking with Biobaku, I'm assuming you were talking with him in English.

DREWAL: [00:38:26] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:38:28] And when you were at the sports club in Abeokuta with your Yoruba colleagues, was the language of the club English, among the Yoruba there?

DREWAL: [00:38:37] Yeah, pretty much. Because they were all educated. They were either, you know, they were teachers in secondary school or the other members of the club were, you know, government officials and lawyers

and doctors. You know, it was the male, and it was male. It was a men's club. And the British, you know, out of the British tradition, and they were the elite in the community. They were the professionals or the government officials because the club itself was in an area that was known as the GRA, the government reservation area, where colonial houses had been built for the colonial officials. And along with that, there was a swimming pool and, you know, a golf course and a tennis court.

NOBLE: [00:39:24] All British?

DREWAL: [00:39:25] Yeah, yeah. Right. Exactly. And then inherited by the Yoruba and the Nigerians who took over.

NOBLE: [00:39:34] So your first year eventually comes to an end?

DREWAL: [00:39:38] Well, yeah, yeah. But also, I don't remember the timing of it because those are the things with about the museum come fairly early on, and it's by the latter part of my first year that I shift my vacation activities to setting up vacation arts camps for primary school kids in Abeokuta.

NOBLE: [00:40:06] Primary school? So these are not the students that you're working with.

DREWAL: [00:40:09] No, no. These are younger kids in other schools, other primary schools. And I had a number of other volunteers. One of the other Peace Corps volunteers who was there. And VSO, one or two VSO volunteers, and other Yoruba colleagues, teacher colleagues who were interested in art to set up these art camps.

NOBLE: [00:40:34] This is great. And this is your idea?

DREWAL: [00:40:36] Yeah, this is my idea.

NOBLE: [00:40:38] So what did you do, when you say an arts camp?

DREWAL: [00:40:41] Well, we would bring the kids to one of the schools where the facilities were emptied or the kids had gone because they were coming to

a secondary school campus. But they were the primary school kids in town. So they would come in the morning and we would do various kinds of arts and crafts projects and games for them during the day. That's what we ran.

NOBLE: [00:41:07] And these children would be Yoruba speakers. This is all happening in Yoruba?

DREWAL: [00:41:11] Yes, it's all happening in Yoruba. Yeah. Or and many of them were in schools again where they were trying to push English because that was the entrance into the academic secondary schools since English was still a compulsory subject at any stage, you see. So, yeah, so again, I was expressing my own interest in the arts and bringing that to my students or to younger Yoruba in the town.

NOBLE: [00:41:48] And you said at its height there were how many kids?

DREWAL: [00:41:50] I think we had three or four going in different primary schools.

NOBLE: [00:41:56] Oh, simultaneously?

DREWAL: [00:41:58] Simultaneously for a two-week period.

NOBLE: [00:42:01] Mm hmm. And these kids would go home at night? They weren't staying in the boarding facility?

DREWAL: [00:42:06] Right, right.

NOBLE: [00:42:08] And what kind of arts things would you do?

DREWAL: [00:42:15] It was basically painting and paper, you know, working with paper, constructing things with paper. We also we would make paper masks and then they would do some performances with those. Coloring. Coloring kinds of projects. There wasn't any kind of serious sculpture, it was all pretty much two-dimensional work that they were doing. And we also, I don't remember, I don't have much of a sense of the details of the curriculum, and I don't know if I saved any of the materials that we

produced because I had, you know, had booklets, handbooks, you know, for the camps and that kind of thing. And but I haven't thought about it in a long time. So I don't remember the details very well. And then it was games, you know, it was arts and games of various kinds, sports for the younger kids, and we would have meals for them, one meal during the day, it was prepared for them as well.

NOBLE: [00:43:37] You got funding for this.

DREWAL: [00:43:41] I got donations. People, you know, put in time. They volunteered to help me out a little bit. We had some funds. Not much.

NOBLE: [00:43:50] You'd need some funds to feed that one meal.

DREWAL: [00:43:53] Yeah. Yeah, and I think that was coming from our salaries.

NOBLE: [00:43:57] Wow.

DREWAL: [00:43:57] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:44:00] But you were also giving your own free time because if this was on school break, you could have gone off to Ibadan, Lagos.

DREWAL: [00:44:09] Right. Well, I did that too. I did that on some of them. I didn't do this all of my, you know, two-week vacations during the two years. But I did it for I would estimate maybe about a, maybe three or four of the two week, the shorter vacations, and during that time.

NOBLE: [00:44:35] So I'm recalling that somewhere around December, there was a bigger six week, six or seven week school break.

DREWAL: [00:44:45] Yes, right. Well, there was one time when we went to Ibadan for a kind of refresher course in French.

NOBLE: [00:44:54] You were called in by Peace Corps to do that?

DREWAL: [00:44:56] Yeah. And my colleague here at UW was one of the teachers.

NOBLE: [00:45:04] No kidding, and who was that?

DREWAL: [00:45:05] This is Marquat, Idris. Idris Marquat, who's now retired, but who lives just down the street here. He was on the faculty at the University of Ibadan, teaching us French teachers, because he remembers me from then. So when I was recruited to come to UW, he was one of the first people to see me at my interview.

NOBLE: [00:45:30] Oh wonderful.

DREWAL: [00:45:31] Yeah, yeah. So that was a, you know, a kind of in-service training that Peace Corps organized for us as teachers. But that was only the only one. There are shorter vacations we had to ourselves, so I use them for the museum project, then the arts camps. And then I did some traveling. As I said, I had my Honda 50. So there was one vacation. It must have been the longer vacation, but I'm not sure, when I took the train north from Abeokuta up to Zaria, put the Honda on it. And then when I got into the north and I had my Honda and drove around to Zaria and to Kano, and, uh, I think it was just Zaria in Kano. I didn't get up to Sokoto, but I explored the north.

NOBLE: [00:46:34] The north, of course, being a Muslim area. Quite a different culture.

DREWAL: [00:46:37] Yes, very different. Very different. Yep. But I wanted to get a sense of the country. I never did make it to the east during my two years in the Peace Corps, but I did later on. I also, with another contract doctor who was working at the hospital, at Aro Hospital. He was African-American doctor from Seattle. I'm blanking on his name right now, but we decided we wanted to take a trip to Ouagadougou.

NOBLE: [00:47:11] Oh yes.

DREWAL: [00:47:11] And because of the name.

NOBLE: [00:47:14] Ah yes, in what was then called Upper Volta. Today, Burkina Faso.

DREWAL: [00:47:18] Right. So we had his car, he had a car.

NOBLE: [00:47:22] And tell me again, what was his capacity?

DREWAL: [00:47:24] He was a doctor at Aro Hospital, A-R-O Hospital, which was a mental hospital on the outskirts of Abeokuta, very famous for its work on indigenous psychiatric treatments.

NOBLE: [00:47:42] Wow.

DREWAL: [00:47:44] And Tolani Asuni was one of the key Yoruba doctors there who went on to a distinguished career in the World Health Organization, and he was one of my tennis partners. Asuni is his name, Asuni Tolani, Asuni. And this was a hospital that had been founded by T.O. [Thomas Adeoye] Lambo, another Yoruba psychiatrist doctor trained in UK. Lambo. Lambo, yeah, that's it. Yeah, so we took this trip in my friend's car. His name might come to me if I think about this. And so we drove from Abeokuta down to Lagos and then across the coastal road through what was still called Dahomey. Got to Togo and to Lomé. And then headed north from Lomé.

NOBLE: [00:48:49] Ah, up through Togo?

DREWAL: [00:48:51] Yeah, up through Togo. The pavement ended at the city limits of Lomé. And after that, it was a dirt road, washboard road, all the way to Ouagadougou. By the time we got to Ouagadougou, the car takes finished. And one of our, one of the members of our trip, there were three of us. One was ill the whole time, so it was not. It was not a very pleasant trip when we make it to Ouagadougou.

NOBLE: [00:49:19] How many days did it take you to get up there?

DREWAL: [00:49:20] It took us three days, three or four days of constant driving to make it up to Ouagadougou. And then we arrive in Ouagadougou and the pavement starts again.

NOBLE: [00:49:32] And this is now early 1965?

DREWAL: [00:49:35] This is five, 1965. And the American ambassador was Elliott Skinner, famous anthropologist, African-American anthropologist from Columbia University. We got to meet him. We told him we had made it all the way there, but the car was not going to get us back. So he put us up in the embassy guesthouse, where we had access to the embassy swimming pool, and then tried to figure out how we were going to get back in time for our teaching and for his work. It just so happened that the day or two after we arrived and were there at the embassy, the plane that brings food and supplies to the American diplomatic corps had arrived from Lagos and it was a freight plane, so they unloaded all of their goodies that they were going to be living on for the next couple of months. And it was an empty plane. So they say, well, why don't we just put your car inside the plane, fly you back to Lagos.

NOBLE: [00:50:47] Put the whole car inside?

DREWAL: [00:50:48] They put us and the car inside the plane, flew us back to Lagos, and then we managed to get back up to Abeokuta. So that was our Ouagadougou adventure.

NOBLE: [00:51:00] What did you see of Ouagadougou?

DREWAL: [00:51:03] Well, we saw the guesthouse, we saw the swimming pool. We saw some of the streets and some of the French restaurants in Ouagadougou. So that was it, because we only spent maybe about three or four days and then the plane was flying back. So we took it.

NOBLE: [00:51:20] And it had taken you so long to get there. You ate up a lot of available time.

DREWAL: [00:51:22] Took about a week to get there. Yeah, that was an adventure.

NOBLE: [00:51:28] So then you got back. That must have been the long holiday, right?

DREWAL: [00:51:34] I think so, yeah, yeah. Yeah, because the weather. I remember the weather and that's the dry period and it was there was some harmattan, so that would have been January and December, January period. It's about this same time that I make friends with a Yoruba sculptor through the friendship of this Peace Corps woman who was teaching in a different school. She was collecting oral history. She was in literature and she was recording him on stories and songs in Yoruba.

NOBLE: [00:52:15] Recording the sculptor?

DREWAL: [00:52:16] The sculptor, right. Yes, because he was a storyteller as well as a sculptor. I was interested in him as a sculptor. So she introduced me to him. We became friends. Then I, I asked him if I could become his apprentice.

NOBLE: [00:52:31] Do you remember his name?

DREWAL: [00:52:33] Yes. Sanusi. Sanusi. S dot. Dot under the S. A-N-U-S-I. Sanusi.

NOBLE: [00:52:46] Ok. That must be a Youbra special where you have a dot under the S.

DREWAL: [00:52:51] Yes, to make it the 'sh' sound. Yeah. Sanusi. And Sanusi came from the Adugbologe compound, one of the two most famous carving compounds in the city of Abeokuta. Adugbologe. And that's in Imere Quarter. I-M-E-R-E Quarter. And we made our agreement, he agreed to take me on and to teach me, but it had to be in my space, not at his family's compound, because he knew that his father would not approve. His father would have felt that he was giving away trade secrets by teaching me, a white person, a foreigner, carving techniques and secrets, and that I would then become competition to their compound of carvers because that's how they survived.

NOBLE: [00:53:54] Sure. And how far away was the Sanusi compound?

DREWAL: [00:53:58] It was in another part of town, so it was about three or four miles away. It was in a fairly remote area, up in the hills on the other side of the town. So it was not close to where I lived. So he would come to my flat.

NOBLE: [00:54:17] On a bicycle or?

DREWAL: [00:54:18] Yeah, he would take public transportation, but mostly he would walk or three or four miles and with his tools or take his bike and come. And then we would work in one of my rooms, one of my front rooms that was empty in my flat.

NOBLE: [00:54:33] And you'd start with a block of some kind of wood.

DREWAL: [00:54:35] Yeah, we started from the basics. He would bring the wood and we would keep it soaked in water to keep it soft. Because he was using fresh wood. It wasn't aged or dried wood.

NOBLE: [00:54:49] What kind of wood?

DREWAL: [00:54:51] Omo. It was called Omo, O-M-O, wood. And I've written about this experience and it's in the catalog called African Artistry: Technique and Aesthetics in Yoruba Sculpture, that I did for an exhibition at the High Museum in Atlanta in 1980. So that's a publication, and that whole essay is about this apprenticeship.

NOBLE: [00:55:16] Uh huh.

DREWAL: [00:55:18] And this was the start of my understanding the importance of bodily knowledge, sensory knowledge, because what that apprenticeship taught me was that I could never really understand Yoruba carving techniques and aesthetics choices in style and form until I embodied it myself. And that's what apprenticeship is about, imitating your master, your instructor. So he would, you know, carve a bit and then he would on his piece of wood and then give me mine, and I would try to replicate what he was doing. And it took a long time because in the beginning, you know, you use an adze. So it's a chopping motion in the wood and you're trying

to chop with great accuracy and force and not knowing how to use the tool. In the beginning, I would grip it tighter and tighter, trying to make it more and more accurate. And of course, it would be less and less accurate. And I was exhausted after three or four minutes. Whereas a master Yoruba sculptor can work from dawn to dusk without stop because he knows how to use his tools.

NOBLE: [00:56:38] He's got a lighter touch on the grip.

DREWAL: [00:56:41] Exactly. He has the bodily knowledge and wisdom of how to use his tool for carving his form. So that's an apprenticeship started, and we would work maybe two or three times a week. And I worked with him for about seven to eight months altogether.

NOBLE: [00:57:02] And when you were working with him, your language was Yoruba.

DREWAL: [00:57:06] Yeah, it was basic, rudimentary Yoruba because he spoke very little English. But you see, the apprenticeship is observe and imitate.

NOBLE: [00:57:17] Ok, not so much talk.

DREWAL: [00:57:18] No, it's all by action. It's the gesture. It's the form. It's the rhythm, it's the pace, it's the sound. It's all of those things that I had to know and try to emulate. It wasn't verbal instruction, very little. And I would pay him a fee for the time that he came and to teach me. And in the seven or eight months that we worked, I did maybe a total of six or eight pieces and then I did some pieces of my own after the end of the apprenticeship. And I still have, I have three or four of them that I show to my students here at the university.

NOBLE: [00:58:06] So you brought those home.

DREWAL: [00:58:08] I brought those home. A number of ones I gave us to friends, and I don't know where they are now. And two or three of them were stolen from my apartment when I lived and taught in Cleveland.

NOBLE: [00:58:24] Oh, I'm so sorry.

DREWAL: [00:58:26] Well, I'm not so sorry. I mean, they found nothing else in the apartment that was worth stealing. So I feel very complimented by the fact that they thought maybe they had some authentic and therefore very, very expensive African art to sell to somebody. Yeah. So I lost two pieces, two or three pieces.

NOBLE: [00:58:49] Of your own?

DREWAL: [00:58:50] Of my own work, yeah. So that apprenticeship that changed me. It changed my life. It changed my direction because it was just at about that time that we started receiving information from Columbia University and from Teachers College. For those of us who had gone through the training program to encourage us to consider coming back to Columbia through graduate school. So this fusion of interest in Yoruba culture and Yoruba art and Yoruba history with Biobaku, were all things that then started to inform my consideration of going back to graduate school after the Peace Corps, which I did. I applied and was given a fellowship and work and stuff. And that's, but that's later. So but it was also a transformation in my relationship to Yoruba people and Yoruba community that I was living in. Because by the end of that first year, I was spending in that first year in Nigeria, I was still dependent upon, in a sense, and drawn to the other ex-patriots in the community, other British or Canadian or American volunteers.

NOBLE: [01:00:25] The Western culture that is your own.

DREWAL: [01:00:28] Exactly. But the second year I made a transition and I got out of that expat scene, which I liked less and less, and I moved much closer physically, emotionally, psychologically to the Yoruba community that I was living in. And learning from, my students, this master sculptor, my other Yoruba colleagues and other Yoruba friends. And that was a very important shift for me. And I saw how some of my colleagues did it and many did not. Many of them stayed in the safe space of expatriate community. But it was the second year of my stay that was really the

transformative one and the one that I value the most because that's the one that's given me grounding and direction and commitment.

NOBLE: [01:01:32] Yes. It's pointed the direction of the rest of your life?

DREWAL: [01:01:36] Yeah, exactly.

NOBLE: [01:01:38] While you were there, I'm remembering your first two weeks in homesickness and I'm remembering the closeness of your family. How were you able to stay in touch with your family to let them know how you were, what you were doing, what you were engaging in?

DREWAL: [01:01:56] By aerogram letters. The, you know, the thin paper blue paper ones that you then folded up and put glue on to seal and send on its way. Because I was doing that and along with my photographs, with slides that I was making, although

NOBLE: [01:02:17] You sent them the slides?

DREWAL: [01:02:18] Yeah, I also sent. To Kodak. I would send the film to Kodak for the processing, and then they would send the processed slides to my parents. So they were kind of being sent overseas in their packages.

NOBLE: [01:02:34] Did you do audio cassette tape, voice recordings?

DREWAL: [01:02:38] No, I didn't. Well, yes, I think I might have done one or two, but not very many. It was mostly the letters.

NOBLE: [01:02:45] And the letter would take more than two days to get there?

DREWAL: [01:02:49] Yeah, it would take about take about two weeks to get and two weeks to come back from stage.

NOBLE: [01:02:54] To get their reply, right?

DREWAL: [01:02:57] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [01:02:58] So no iPhone.

DREWAL: [01:03:01] No, no, no. It was long distance and slow communication. And that was OK. That was fine. Once I found my footing and started to position myself where I was physically.

NOBLE: [01:03:21] Do you still have those letters? Did your parents save them?

DREWAL: [01:03:24] They did, and I have them.

NOBLE: [01:03:26] You have them.

DREWAL: [01:03:26] I have them somewhere in the HJD archive, in my garage.

NOBLE: [01:03:32] Good. We'll talk about what you might do with those letters after the interview.

DREWAL: [01:03:37] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [01:03:39] So and your health throughout these two years, how were you holding up?

DREWAL: [01:03:42] My health was good, I was good. I never had any malaria during the time. I don't remember any.

NOBLE: [01:03:50] Did you take Aralen?

DREWAL: [01:03:52] Yep, I did.

NOBLE: [01:03:53] Once a week?

DREWAL: [01:03:54] I think, yeah, I think I did. I think I was pretty conscientious about that. But I was living in a, you know, I was up on the second floor. So I was above the ground and I had a mosquito net over my bed and I had good accommodations, very comfortable. So it was only when I was doing travels that I, you know, might have been subject to malaria, but

never experienced it and never had any serious health problems. My health has always been good.

NOBLE: [01:04:32] That's great. Did Peace Corps ever come to visit, Peace Corps staff, come to visit you on site in Abeokuta?

DREWAL: [01:04:40] Yes, I think once or twice in the two-year period, not often.

NOBLE: [01:04:47] Gamma globulin shots and so forth.

DREWAL: [01:04:49] Oh yeah, I think so. Maybe, but that was an Ibadan.

NOBLE: [01:04:55] Oh, you went into Ibadan?

DREWAL: [01:04:56] I think I had to go into Ibadan for that kind of thing. And it was in Ibadan that I also ate. I became close friends with a very famous Yoruba sculptor, Fakeye.

NOBLE: [01:05:09] Ah yes, I was going to ask if you had met him. Lamidi.

DREWAL: [01:05:12] Lamidi. Yeah, because he had become friends with a number of the Americans in USIS, and they organized exhibitions of his work. And that's how his career really blossomed. And he took on apprentices. And one of those apprentices many years later, in 1970, when I was back doing my PhD research, was one of his apprentices was my co-carver when I was back at the University of Ife and we used to carve together. He had studied with Fakeye. Fakeye had always wanted me to come and apprentice under him when he found out that I was doing it in Abeokuta, he said you should come in and work with me. But Ibadan was too far away and it was, I didn't have any housing there. It wasn't convenient. And so it never happened. But we became close friends. And yeah, we'd go to his exhibitions and loved his work. And I've brought him here to Wisconsin to two times when he was coming to the States, he's now passed away. And we have one of his wonderful works in the permanent collection here.

NOBLE: [01:06:29] Yes, I've seen it. It's gorgeous.

DREWAL: [01:06:30] Yeah, it's a beautiful piece.

NOBLE: [01:06:32] He had a brother, Hakim, whose work is similar.

DREWAL: [01:06:36] Very similar. Yeah, very similar.

NOBLE: [01:06:39] But Hakim didn't get the fame of his brother Lamidi.

DREWAL: [01:06:41] No. Yeah, Lamidi, he was the master. Lots of imitators. But he was the master. And then it was in those years in the seventies when he got a position at the University of Ife as their resident artist, and he was teaching the wood sculpture section in the art department.

NOBLE: [01:07:06] And that was when you went back after Peace Corps.

DREWAL: [01:07:09] Yeah, this was after Peace Corps, right. Because I, you know, I was there in Nigeria until August of '66, then started graduate school soon after. And, you know, in September of '66, and it was in June of, May, June of '70 when I finished all my coursework and was ABD that I went back to Nigeria to do my field research for the PhD. And it was that time that I was at Ife, affiliated with Ife. So let's see. So, that's for the two years in Nigeria. When I was leaving to come back to the States, I decided that was my one opportunity to do my roots journey.

NOBLE: [01:08:03] On your way home?

DREWAL: [01:08:03] On my way home.

NOBLE: Ok, so let's hear it. Where did you go?

DREWAL: [01:08:06] Well, this was during the heat of the Cold War and therefore to go to Russia, because I wanted to go to Russia. I wanted to go to the USSR. You had to go through Intourist, which was the official government. And Americans were not free to travel anywhere in the USSR, but I was able to get a visa to go to Moscow thinking that maybe I could get down to the Ukraine where my grandfather had come from or Belarus. But in fact, it

never happened. But I got my visa, so my first trip. From Nigeria, I flew to Egypt and I spent about a week in Egypt.

NOBLE: [01:08:48] From Lagos?

DREWAL: [01:08:50] To Cairo. Cairo. And I spent a week in Egypt and I went up the Nile to Luxor and explored some of those incredible sights. Got a sense, a little bit of a sense of Egypt. And then from Cairo, I flew to I think it was Lebanon and it was a one-day stopover. So I don't remember much about Beirut. And then from there I flew to Moscow.

NOBLE: [01:09:21] So you had to procure your visa for Russia in Nigeria, in Lagos, somehow at the embassies?

DREWAL: [01:09:27] At the Russian Embassy in Lagos, yeah. That's how I got that.

NOBLE: [01:09:32] That must have taken some time.

DREWAL: [01:09:33] A little bit of time. Yeah, yeah. And it was very restrictive. And during that time when I landed in Moscow, you couldn't spend any money. You had to pay for these meal tickets. And you had to eat in the restaurants that were set aside for foreigners, tourists, visitors. So I was there in these places, these government run cafeterias for foreigners, and that's not what I had come for.

NOBLE: [01:10:05] No, no, that's not what you wanted.

DREWAL: [01:10:07] When I was at Hamilton, I studied Russian for two years. I didn't remember much of it, but it helped me start to have conversations and I found my way to some, to some Russian folks. But it was only in the last two or three days of my 10 day stay that I was able to converse. You know, enough of my Russian had come back. But then it was too late and I couldn't leave Moscow and there was no way to get to the Ukraine. So that was my roots journey. And then from Moscow, I flew to Berlin. What would have been, yeah, West Berlin. Met Peter Crone again and spent some time with him.

NOBLE: [01:10:59] This is your third time now with Peter.

DREWAL: [01:11:01] Well, he yeah, third time, since he lived with us in Hempstead. And then when I went to see him in '61 and then '66. And I've seen him since then too. And then from West Berlin, I flew back to New York and met my family, met me at JFK. And in the exchange of greetings as I got off the plane, all they could do was laugh because I was speaking Nigerian English and I couldn't hear it. They said, is that you, Henry? And all they could do was laugh, and I didn't know what they were laughing at. So that was the return. The return experience, because my speech patterns had changed completely in order to make myself understandable to my students in Nigeria.

NOBLE: [01:12:01] And you speak special English.

DREWAL: [01:12:03] Yeah. And if I meet a Yoruba person, I fall back into it immediately.

NOBLE: [01:12:08] Yeah, yeah.

DREWAL: [01:12:10] And then the other thing that they also marveled at was my sitting there at the first meal that we shared, putting piles of salt and pepper on my food because it was tasteless to me after.

NOBLE: [01:12:26] Oh, after all the.

DREWAL: [01:12:27] The pepper of two years of Nigerian cuisine. So.

NOBLE: [01:12:33] Transitions happen in both directions

DREWAL: [01:12:38] Both directions, yeah, and in fact, coming home, I think it's tougher than going away.

NOBLE: [01:12:42] Mm hmm. You look at, you begin to get a view of your own country. Did that change for you?

DREWAL: [01:12:48] Oh yeah, very much, very much. I strongly advocate that every American should have an experience outside, a serious cross-cultural experience, in order to understand their own country in the world system because we get a very different view. As I like to say, we think we have a free press. We don't, we have a bought press, we have a paid-for press, and we only hear what those payers want us to hear and see. So that was a real eye-opener, and every American should have that experience.

NOBLE: [01:13:30] Anything else that you'd like to put on record about your two years in the Peace Corps?

DREWAL: [01:13:38] Well, I'm sure many others have said this, but I'll repeat it as well. I think I contributed little to Nigeria in its formative years from '64 to '66. I may have touched and inspired some of my students. Maybe they learned a little bit of French so that they could visit their neighbors in other parts of West Africa. But in the end, it changed me, didn't change. I didn't help change Nigeria. But Nigeria changed me dramatically, and I hope in positive ways. So that I have some knowledge and some sensitivity to what they are experiencing and how they're finding their way in this world. And that it's helped me to share that with my students and the people that I live and know, live with and know.

NOBLE: [01:14:51] Thank you.

DREWAL: [01:14:53] You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]